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Voter Registrar responds to LULAC “political” lawsuit

Sumners says suit lacks merit, plaintiffs using bogus “facts”

HOUSTON – (Oct. 11, 2012) – Harris County Voter Registrar Don Sumners issued the following statement today:

Here we go again. Another unwarranted political lawsuit.

This morning I learned that LULAC planned to file a Federal lawsuit against me and Harris County today. The Secretary of State is not named as a defendant. The LULAC press conference notice alleges the County has engaged in “discriminatory purging of registered Latino and Black voters in Harris County.” The discriminatory purging is said to involve “otherwise qualified voters for minor technicalities in registration and the declaring live person to be deceased has been overwhelming targeted at Latino and Black voters.” [Sic]

There is no doubt that this lawsuit is politically motivated. The actual allegations in the lawsuit for the most part cover the same accusations of the Texas Democratic Party suit of 2008. After months of discovery and the taking of multiple depositions, the lawsuit was resolved when the Democratic Party was unable to produce a single person who had been illegally denied the right to register and vote.

The resolution of the Democratic Party suit did contain one provision for change that the Tax Office agreed to. That was that we would not automatically reject a voter application where the residence address given was determined to be a commercial address. LULAC claims in their suit that we have not honored this provision. Their charge is not true. Ironically, an individual associated with True the Vote, a Tea Party initiative, has recently sent us a ‘challenge’ list including the names of hundreds of registered voters with non-residential addresses he wants my office to remove from the voter roll.

There are also allegations that my office has acted in a discriminatory manner by disproportionately purging minority voters whose names appeared on the “dead voter” lists recently received from the Secretary of State. As of today, no registered voter whose name appeared on either list has been purged unless the voter’s death has been confirmed. I have publically promised that none will be removed until after the Nov. 6 election and a thorough screening by my office.

In addition, LULAC is claiming procedures required by my office are hindering voter registration efforts of the League of Women Voters at monthly naturalization ceremonies for new citizens. Embarrassingly for LULAC, here again this allegation is totally wrong and easily disproven.

It is unfortunate that LULAC has chosen not to discuss their concerns with my office and instead filed a lawsuit based on erroneous assumptions and bogus “facts.”

Politicizing the public's perception of the integrity of this office in protecting the voting rights of citizens is going to hurt, not help the credibility of LULAC. My record shows that I am above board and do what is right, regardless.

Don Sumners, CPA, RTA
Tax Assessor-Collector and Voter Registrar

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